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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EFIN](#) [ECON](#) [SL](#)
SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE LAUNCHES YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SCHEME

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Elizabeth Pratt
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) On October 9, Charge and PolOff attended the launching of the GoSL's Youth Employment Scheme (YES). Vice President Solomon Berewa gave the keynote address. Many ministers and a few donor agencies' representatives attended the event. Berewa announce that the government had earmarked 1 billion Leones (USD 334,000) to create immediate employment opportunities for young people between the ages of 15-35 years, who constitute an estimated 33.3 percent of the total population. Berewa said that YES would generate 135,000 jobs over the next 12 months, and that the government would closely monitor job growth and produce quarterly reports on the number of jobs generated.

¶2. (U) In his speech Berewa warned that high levels of youth unemployment were cause for alarm, and that the government had prioritized youth unemployment in its Poverty Reduction Strategy. Following the launching, Berewa led a delegation to New York to meet with the UN Peacebuilding Commission to discuss strategies to address the challenges of rebuilding the country and consolidating peace. Comment: The event likely was timed to give the government a deliverable for its meeting with the Commission. End Comment.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: The launch was well-timed to show program initiative to confront one of Sierra Leone's pressing needs. This initiative is very ambitious and, according to the government, seeks to remedy past programs that did not successfully address unemployment problems. It remains to be seen if the government's program is a sincere attempt to generate employment or just another vote-buying exercise by the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) to court the large voting bloc represented by undereducated, disgruntled, and unemployed youth who are both a threat to the country's ongoing development and its continued security. END COMMENT.

PRATT